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GM'S MONTHLY MISCELLANY: FEBRUARY 2015



THE SUNKEN PYRAMID

A Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Compatible Adventure for 7th-level characters by Creighton Broadhurst and Marc Radle

Only a few miles from a small seaside village, the mysterious underwater edifice known as the Sunken Pyramid lies hidden beneath the waves. The handful of sages and scholars with any knowledge of this massive stone structure debate whether it is a completely natural rock formation, a natural site that has been intentionally modified or something built long ago by human, or inhuman, hands.

Locals and ship's crews alike report signs of increased sahuagin activity in the waters around the Sunken Pyramid. Is the recent rash of disappearances and abductions which have plagued the area connected in any way? Can these abductions be stopped before even more people are taken? Can those already abducted be found and rescued? And what of the strange and often conflicting rumours which whisper of something far more terrible lurking far beneath the Sunken Pyramid?

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"...this adventure has everything you need to run it successfully. Very well done."

—DM Jeff (five stars)

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GM'S MONTHLY MISCELLANY: FEBRUARY 2015

Featuring material from some of Raging Swan Press's newest products as well as classic releases of yesteryear, advice articles and material from Creighton's own Borderland of Adventure campaign, the GM's Monthly Miscellany series is a terrific free resource for the busy, time-crunched GM.

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Thank you for purchasing *GM's Monthly Miscellany: February 2015*; we hope you enjoy it and that you check out our other fine print and PDF products.

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SOURCES

As well as new, never seen before material from my own Borderland of Adventure campaign, this instalment of GM's Monthly Miscellany presents information from several Raging Swan Press products and advice articles including:

- **Henchfolk & Hirelings** Christian Alipounarian, Creighton Broadhurst and Andy Glenn.
- **Urban Dressing: War-Torn Town** Josh Vogt.
- **Village Backdrop: Aldwater** Jacob Trier.

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FOREWORD

Welcome to *GM's Monthly Miscellany: February 2015*. Herein you'll find excerpts from some of Raging Swan's newest products as well as material from a golden oldie – *Henchfolk & Hirelings*. I've also included a selection of advice articles from those posted weekly at creightonbroadhurst.com as well as another look at Gloamhold – the megadungeon I am live-designing at my blog. This week, I take a look at one of the easiest areas to reach – the shattered, crumbling cliff-fortress of Rivengate.

It's been a busy month or so at Raging Swan Press. As (hopefully) you've noticed we've got a new look website. I think the general layout and feel of the site is much better than the old version, which was getting a little clunky. The downside of changing over to a new site is filling it with all the information from the old site. Our old site had somewhere in the region of 250 pages, and that's a lot of information to move across. Obviously, I'm not finished yet but hopefully you can see how things are shaping up. (In fact, if you've got any suggestions about improving the site, I'd love to hear them).

You'll also (hopefully) have noticed that we've got more of our print products available at RPGNow and DriveThruRPG. That's been a goal of mine for quite some time, but until now circumstances and a lack of technology conspired to keep our print products away from OBS. By the summer I hope to have all our books available there.

In my personal gaming, we are still on a break from my own *Borderland of Adventure* campaign, instead playing some of the newest incarnation of the world's oldest role-playing game. I'm still not sure exactly what I think about the game – it's a frustrating mix of things of likes and dislikes!

In any event, I hope you enjoy the material in this *GM's Monthly Miscellany*, but more importantly I hope you find it useful and that it enhances your campaign. If you've got any comments or questions about Raging Swan Press, I'd love to hear from you. You can contact me at creighton@ragingswan.com.



PLAYER ADVICE: INVENTIVE USES FOR MID-LEVEL SPELLS

Adventuring at any level is a tricky business. Death is a constant companion and often the only things separating a PC from its cold embrace are his wits and cunning.

Last week, I posted several inventive uses for low-level spells. This week, it seemed natural to examine some mid-level spells.

STONE SHAPE

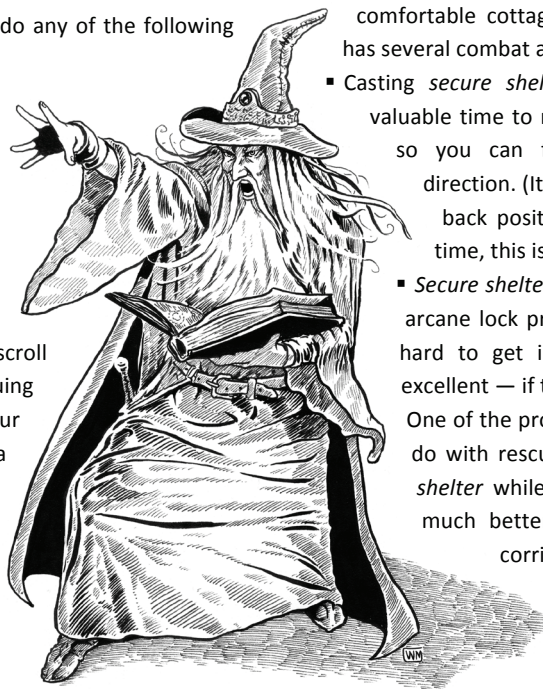
This seemingly innocuous spell has so many uses an inventive player can get some serious mileage out of it. (Note, however, because this spell has so many uses, it's more open to GM adjudication than most.) Your GM might not be happy with some of these tactics:

- Fly above a foe and stone shape a block out of the ceiling. The block plummets to the ground, squishing whatever stands beneath. (In 2nd edition, I killed a red dragon using this technique!)
- Create a pit full of dust by casting *stone shape* on the floor. Characters falling into the pit may suffocate before managing to climb out. (At the very least, they will be vulnerable to attacks of opportunity as they struggle to escape). For extra, bonus points cast it directly below a foe.
- If your foes must climb up (or down) stairs to reach you, use *stone shape* to turn it into a slide when they are halfway down. They'll likely slip and fall, landing prone at the bottom of the slide.

EXPLOSIVE RUNES

This handy spell has several uses. Cast it on several scrolls and keep them about your person. You can do any of the following with the scrolls:

- Throw the scroll behind you to throw off (or blow up) pursuing enemies (assuming they can read and understand a dropped scroll might be valuable).
- Nail the affected scroll to the door of the room in which you are resting. Monsters are bound to look at the scroll before opening the door. The ensuing explosion should give you and your companions enough time to muster a defence before the scorched and singed monsters stagger through the door.



- If you encounter guards in the dungeon, loudly state you are on their master's business and the scroll you carry gives you authority to act in his name. Offer to let them read it, if they don't believe you...

FIRE TRAP

This defensive spell has similar applications to explosive runes:

- Cast *fire trap* on an escape pouch (preferably containing a couple of flasks of alchemist's fire) and throw it behind you when you want to get away from a fight. Hopefully, a pursuer will stop to open it, and immolate itself.
- Use *fire trap* to defend your camp. Cast it on a door (in a dungeon) or tent flap (in the wild) and anyone not attuned to the trap passing through the portal will detonate it — giving you warning of their approach.
- Cast the spell on a small box, scroll case or pouch. Keep it safe, and use it as a "gift" if negotiations with a dungeon denizen are going badly. The resultant explosion will no doubt surprise and injure your foe. You might even get a surprise round!

SECURE SHELTER

- At first glance, *secure shelter* does one thing only: it creates a comfortable cottage in which to rest. However, the spell has several combat applications that often go unnoticed:
- Casting *secure shelter* so it blocks a corridor gives you valuable time to run away. It can also block off one flank so you can focus on foes coming from another direction. (It can also be used as a strongpoint or fall-back position). Note that due to the long casting time, this is best done before combat begins.
- *Secure shelter* creates a sturdy cottage, which with its arcane lock protected shuttered windows and door is hard to get into (or out of). This can make it an excellent — if temporary — prison.

One of the problems adventurers often face is what to do with rescued prisoners. Leaving them in a *secure shelter* while the party continues its explorations is much better than leaving them huddled in some corridor or other unsafe locale.

ALDWATER AT A GLANCE

For centuries, Aldwater has stood where the water of Blackraven Creek runs off into The Deepmire Marshes. On an island in the mouth of the creek, the villagers long ago erected a wooden labyrinth to hold the remains of their dead.

At regular intervals, the spiritual leader of the village, Leodus Breurk the Spiritspeaker, enters the labyrinth to commune with his predecessors' mummified heads through an ancient relic called the Crown of Eternal Council.

However, the collective knowledge and wisdom of the council is limited to what the individual members knew at the time of their death, and the council's traditionalist advice has not been adequate to deal with a recent decrease in the populations of fish and marsh animals the villagers rely upon to survive.

The villagers suspect the decrease is caused by subtle changes in the environment, but strange mutations in some of the animals hint at more sinister forces at work. Fear of hostile boggard tribes and savage monsters has so far dissuaded the villagers from travelling deep into the Deepmire Marshes to investigate.

Faced with the prospect of starvation, Leodus Breurk, the current Spiritspeaker, recently made an unprecedented decision. When a wizard from the nearby village of Fulhurst Moors approached him seeking information about ancient sacrificial sites in the marshes, Leodus agreed to ask the ancestors for the information, in return for a sizable donation.

Since then, Leodus has petitioned the ancestors for advice on behalf of half a dozen different strangers, and the rumour is slowly spreading. Each new visitor brings much needed gold, but many villagers feel the new practice is paramount to sacrilege.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Leodus Breurk (N male human cleric 7)

Government Magical

Population 134 (125 humans, 1 gnome, 2 half-elves, 1 half-orc, 5 halflings)

Alignments LN, CN, N

Languages Boggard, Common, Draconic

Corruption -4; **Crime** -4; **Economy** -1; **Law** +2; **Lore** +2; **Society** -1

Qualities Holy site, superstitious

Danger +0; **Disadvantages** Impoverished

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Brexander Greenroot (location 1; CG male gnome ranger 3)
Brexander is willing to guide travellers into The Deepmire Marshes.

Hollean Uthevere (location 6; N male human expert 2) Proud and ambitious, Hollean owns the Roaring Dragon Inn and is the most vocal supporter of Spiritspeaker Breurk.

Hywain Glengaine (location 2; LN male middle-aged human fighter 4) As captain of the Labyrinth Guardians, Hywain is loyal to the Spiritspeaker, even if he disapproves of his recent decisions.

Kerin Banell (location 2; LN male human fighter 2) Kerin is the hot tempered second in command of the Labyrinth Guardians.

Kynell Lawain (location 7; NG male human expert 2) Kynell operates the local trade station.

Lanna Glengaine (location 6; NE female human commoner 2)
Hywain Glengaine's beautiful, but capricious, daughter works as a barmaid and excels in inspiring volatile social situations.

Leodus Breurk (location 4; N male human cleric 7) As Spiritspeaker, Leodus has to make difficult decisions affecting the entire community.

Terric Modan (location 5; CN male human sorcerer [aberrant] 4)
Terric goes to great lengths to conceal his growing sorcerous powers.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of the village comprises modest homes built on raised wooden platforms. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **Brexander Greenroot's house:** Home of the most experienced marsh guide in the village.
2. **Guardian's Hall:** Home of the warriors who guard the Labyrinth of the Ancestors and act as the village militia.
3. **Labyrinth of the Ancestors:** This wooden maze contains the earthly remains of Aldwater's dead.
4. **Spiritspeaker's house:** Home of Spiritspeaker Leodus Breurk.
5. **Terric Modan's house:** Home of the sorcerer Terric Modan.
6. **The Roaring Dragon:** The newly established inn, which many locals jokingly refer to as "The Burping Lizard", is often busy.
7. **Trade Station:** Kynell Lawain ferries hides and fish up the creek and returns with trade goods from nearby settlements.

MARKETPLACE

Resources & Industry Fishing, hunting, trapping

Base Value 250 gp; **Purchase Limit** 1,250 gp; **Spellcasting** 4th;
Minor Items 1d4; **Medium Items** 1d2; **Major Items** –

When the PCs arrive in Aldwater, the following items are for sale:

- **Potions & Oils** *endure elements* (50 gp), *light* (25 gp)
- **Scroll (Divine)** *obscuring mist* (25 gp), *purify food and drink* (12 gp, 5 sp)
- **Wand** *wind wall* (37 chgs.; 8,375 gp)

VILLAGE LORE

A PC making a Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (local) check may know some information about Aldwater. A successful check reveals all the information revealed by a lesser result.

DC 10: Aldwater lies at the mouth of Blackraven Creek, where it flows into the Deepmire Marshes.

DC 15: The most prominent feature of Aldwater is the large wooden labyrinth on an island in the middle of the village. It is said to contain the remains of the villagers' ancestors.

DC 20: The spiritual leader of the village can use a secret ritual to gain knowledge from the dead.

VILLAGERS

Appearance Black hair and blue eyes are dominant among the villagers, most of who are below average height.

Dress Most villagers wear loose fitted leggings and shirts, made from a light, quick-drying fabric. Scarfs are often wrapped around the head to keep away insects.

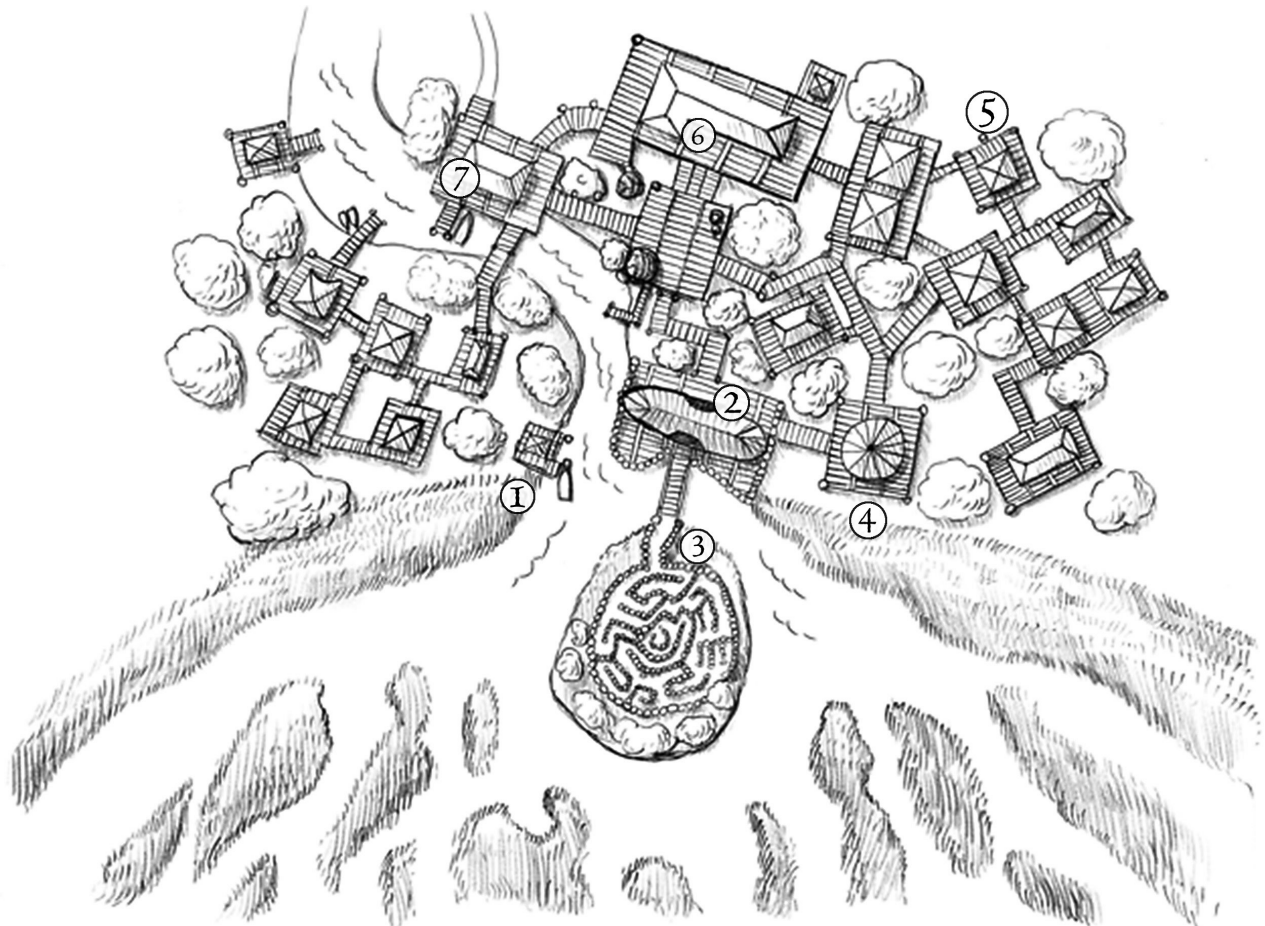
Nomenclature *male* Girnach, Henn, Luwain, Morion, Rhylf; *female* Elaida, Grisanna, Isuefar, Nilda, Shavinia; *family* Aralon, Blagant, Glerent, Melydd, Teigan.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A PC can use Diplomacy to gather information about Aldwater and its surroundings. This takes 1d4 hours and requires a DC 10 check. A PC exceeding this check gains one additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10. Use the table below to determine which rumour(s) the PC learns.

D6	RUMOUR
1	A gigantic frog-like monster lives within the Deepmire Marshes. Local boggard tribes worship it as a god.
2	There is something strange about Terric Modan. He's got a secret he's desperate to hide.
3	Brexander Greenroot has been trying to catch a huge electric eel called Ol' Spark for years. His last attempt almost cost him his life.
4*	Lanna Glengaine once persuaded Kerin Banell to sneak her into the Labyrinth of the Ancestors.
5	The last group of strangers who sought knowledge from the ancestors in the labyrinth sailed into the Deepmire Marshes afterwards. They haven't returned.
6*	The council of ancestors have cursed Leodus Breurk because he shares their wisdom with outsiders.

*False rumour



WAR-TORN TOWN: SIGHTS & SOUNDS

Use this table to generate the sights and sounds the PCs experience as they move about the war-torn town. Ignore inappropriate results and simply re-roll.

D%	
1	Ash has drifted down from the skies to coat every surface in sight.
2	The buildings along this street all appear to be leaning, as if their foundations are crumbling.
3	Smoke plumes into the air as tongues of wicked fire lick the buildings.
4	A string of black-garbed widows and orphans line the street to weep as a squad marches by.
5	This whole block has been reduced to rubble and wreckage.
6	Piles of broken and shattered armour lie strewn on the ground, battered beyond use.
7	Snapped spears and mangled swords form piles off to one side of the street.
8	Half-a-dozen corpses are carried by, laid out on their own bloodstained shields.
9	The soft sound of sobs and choked weeping fills the air.
10	A priest in a gilded robe strolls by a line of recruits, laying hands on each in blessing.
11	A zealous rebel stands on the corner, ignoring glares as he shouts a creed of violent defiance.
12	A trio of soldiers are strung up; their arms and legs are lashed to spears driven through their chests.
13	A family cries for help as soldiers raid their home, taking every scrap of their food.
14	This band of recruits looks to comprise little more than children.
15	Hard-eyed mercenaries lounge about, drinking and scowling at anyone who pays them the slightest bit of attention.
16	A person entirely encased in plate armour stands nearby, watching everyone.
17	The air-quaking screams suggest the local surgeon is hard at work amputating more limbs.
18	These beggars use dented and rusted helms as bowls and claim they're veterans too old to fight.
19	A scattering of metal and wooden shards on the road is what remains of a knight's shield.
20	In the distance, a row of people on mounts is silhouetted against the horizon.
21	Distant cries and clashes indicate the battling has renewed with increased ferocity.
22	Droop-shouldered sentries trudge along the tops of the walls, rarely bothering to watch beyond the town.
23	A horse careens passed, saddle empty, its mouth and mane are coated in froth.

24	A robed figure nails a flier to a post, announcing fresh recruitment efforts.
25	This wall is engraved with all the names of the dead—there must be hundreds of them.
26	A group of children have turned a trash heap into the epicentre of their “king of the hill” game.
27	A cart trundles by, weighed down by dozens of stiff and rotting bodies.
28	This person appears to be selling scraps and goods scrounged from those killed in battle.
29	A hedge witch rasps out offers of charms and spells to protect one against death.
30	As a squad marches by, a woman trails after, screaming for one of the soldiers to return home.
31	A soldier limps by using his sword as a cane; a grey beard hangs down to his waist.
32	A skinny youth clatters past, his armour far too big for his lanky frame.
33	The sewers and gutters of the town are full of bloody water and crimson mud.
34	Terrible shrieks tear the air as a team of horses are slaughtered to provide food for the townsfolk.
35	The heads of enemy soldiers are stuck on pikes all around town.
36	This building has been brightly painted in loyalist colours and insignia.
37	A bundle of flags have been set alight and tossed to burn in the middle of the road.
38	A group of rioters storm down the street, chanting violent threats.
39	Cries of fear echo as several soldiers kick down the door to a home.
40	A soldier sits rocking back and forth, cradling his sword as if it were a babe.
41	The stink of gangrene makes people retch as they pass by the local apothecaries' home.
42	Agonized weeping comes from the makeshift hospital tents set up along the street.
43	A family kneels in the street in the wake of a squad, offering up prayers for protection to their god.
44	A pile of battlefield loot sits in the middle of town, ignored and untouched by all.
45	Whatever this building used to be, all that remains is an ashen husk.
46	Soldiers pound on every door, searching buildings one by one.
47	Every street is barricaded by spiked metal and wooden posts.
48	A sentry tower stands ablaze on the edge of town, casting sparks and embers onto the nearby rooftops.

49	A waft of rot emanates from the nearby shop, which has shuttered windows and a barred door.
50	The supply caravan lumbering into town looks like most of its goods have been pilfered by its guards.
51	The person off to the side has a shifting gaze as they sketch out a map of the area.
52	A herd of pigs has been outfitted with miniature armour and sports iron-capped tusks.
53	A pack of snarling, slavering war hounds tug at their master's leashes.
54	As a person walks by, a brand under his rags—labelling him a deserter—is briefly visible.
55	This miserable lot of scarred and wounded slaves looks to be culled from enemy ranks.
56	Men nail up a variety of charcoal sketches detailing a fresh batch of soldiers wanted for desertion.
57	The general who just staggered by reeks of whiskey more than the most drunken beggar.
58	A pair of soldiers shows off a weapons demonstration to a group of grubby children.
59	Two people stand in the street bellowing a mix of military propaganda at one another.
60	A blind oracle shambles past, muttering the word “doom” over and over.
61	Every wall surrounding the town appears to be falling apart.
62	The main gates to the town lie knocked off their hinges and cast to the side.
63	These painted slogans look to be the work of a bunch of soldiers.
64	An enemy soldier peers out from behind the bars of the local jail.
65	A large tent serves as the centre of a bustling military camp.
66	A uniformed courier dashes by, boots polished and sabre rattling in its sheath.
67	The squad marching through the town bears the royal colours and insignia.
68	Every home in town shows some sign of disrepair or damage, from caved-in roofs to shattered windows.
69	A shadowy figure ducks down an alley and vanishes into a gutter opening.
70	Off to one side, a person touches a brick in a wall and a secret door slides open.
71	A haunting melody fills the air as a band plays dirges as they shuffle passed.
72	The doors and windows of these home are laid across with thick chains.
73	The entire town is blanketed with an unnatural silence.
74	The screams in the distance have been going on for hours, and they don't sound human.
75	A single soldier tries to protect himself as a mob of townsfolk curse and fling rocks his way.

76	Children scuttle by, digging through garbage and heaps for any crumb of food.
77	A group of soldiers stand around the entrance to a cellar as smoke pours up the stairs.
78	A goodly number of trip wires, bear traps and hastily concealed pits defend this neighbourhood.
79	Villagers have gathered to work on crumbling and charred portions of the town walls.
80	Townfolk work alongside guards to construct a catapult out of any wood scraps lying around.
81	These stocks stand empty, but the fresh gore on the wood indicates recent usage.
82	A lone lute, strings cut and frame cracked, lies in the middle of the road.
83	A whip cracks as a deserter has his back turned into a bloody mess beneath the lashings.
84	A shirtless man strides by, back straight despite his torso being a mass of scars.
85	This puppet show is little more than a demonstration of gory ways one can be killed in battle.
86	Several youths flee from a pair of guards who look too wearied to give proper chase.
87	A child clutches the ankle of a man, pleading for “Papa” to not leave.
88	An enemy soldier hollers down from atop the tower, taunting anyone to try and remove him.
89	One soldier falls to the ground in mid-step and is left there as his regiment marches on.
90	Townfolk stream along the main street, carrying dozens of sealed coffins to the graveyard.
91	Enormous stones form a giant cairn in the middle of town, dedicated to “All Who Have Fallen.”
92	What looks like a heap of muddy rags is revealed to be a pile of discarded military uniforms.
93	The harsh cawing of buzzards grows louder as a flock settles over the town.
94	This chapel has been set ablaze; flames pour from every window and doorway.
95	Several figures crawl down the street, trailing filth and blood from their bodies.
96	This once-bustling marketplace has been entirely shuttered and closed down.
97	The road is almost completely clogged with abandoned wagons, whose axles and wheels are broken.
98	Men, women and children scream as they sprint away from the approaching soldiers.
99	The skies have been blood-red for a week now, all day, all night.
100	Every guard in town stands perfectly still; peering through the bars of their helms reveals each one is an animated skeleton.

HENCHFOLK & HIRELINGS: HIRING HENCHFOLK

Henchfolk are an adventuring hero's most trusted and useful servants. Able to stand with their master in battle, provide spellcasting support or simply stay at home and guard their master's chattels, henchmen are a good addition to any adventuring party.

Almost any adventuring hero can attract henchfolk. Once a PC has attained 3rd-level he can attempt to attract henchfolk. The overall number of henchmen a PC can have is a function of his Charisma and level. Every PC can have a number of henchfolk equal to $3 + 1/2$ the PC's level + the PC's Charisma modifier. If a henchman dies or leaves the PC, he can be replaced using the method detailed below.

ATTRACTING HENCHFOLK

There may be many prospective henchfolk in a given community, but if the PC does nothing to attract them he will never employ them.

The locale in which the PC decides to attract henchmen is a crucial factor in determining the final number of prospective applicants. No matter how diligent the PC is at seeking out a follower, such individuals do not come in an inexhaustible supply. The settlement's size and location determine the maximum number of applicants. (Of course, the GM can modify these figures if he deems is necessary or desirable).

COMMUNITY SIZE	BASE NUMBER ATTRACTED	MAXIMUM ATTRACTED
Thorp	0	0
Hamlet	0	0
Village	0	1
Small town	1	2
Large town	2	5
Small city	3	12
Large city	6	25
Metropolis	10	50

EXAMPLE

Morgan Ironwolf (a 4th-level fighter) decides she needs to attract some henchfolk. She travels to the nearest large town (base number attracted 2) and posts public notices (cost 50 gp, attracts 1d4 henchmen) and hires a crier (cost 10 gp, attracts 1d2 henchmen) to spread the word.

The public notices attract three prospective henchmen while the crier brings in one more. Thus, Morgan attracts ten potential recruits ($4+2+3+1$). Unfortunately, because she used two methods to attract recruits this result reduces by one for a total of nine potential recruits and a total outlay of 60 gp. Sadly, as she is in a large town this total is reduced to five applicants.

Additionally, a community's location affects how many suitable individuals may be attracted. A community on a borderland or other contested area is treated as if it were one size larger (so, for example, a small town would count as a large town) in terms of how many potential henchmen live within. Similar if a community is very stable and does not have significant external threats to contend with, it counts as one size smaller (so a small town would only have as many potential recruits as a village).

Once the PC has determined where he will search for recruits, he must decide which methods to use. A PC can use any or all of the methods outlined below, but each activity can only be undertaken once a month. If the PC elects to use multiple methods at the same time, but this inevitably results in some wasted, duplicated effort.

METHOD ¹	COST	APPLICANTS ATTRACTED ^{3,4}
Posting public notices	50 gp	1d4
Hiring a crier	10 gp	1d2
Hiring agents	300 gp	2d3
Frequenting inns, taverns and so on ²	var.	var.

1: Reduce the overall number of applicants attracted by 1 for each additional method used beyond the first, as duplication of effort inevitably results.

2: Buying drinks for prospective henchfolk, bribing barkeeps and servers to mention the employment opportunity to likely applicants and so on. For each 10 gp spent (50 gp maximum), the PC attracts 1d2 applicants.

3: Add the base number available in the settlement.

4: Add the PC's level to simulate his renown.

Post Public Notices: The PC posts public notices in taverns, inns and in other public places such as market squares and so on.

Hiring a Crier: The PC hires a town crier, or other individual such as a wandering bard, to spread the word of his need for henchmen.

Hiring Agents: The PC hires agents dedicated to finding suitable candidates. Such individuals have contacts in the local community and, although expensive, this guarantees results. A PC employing this method can reroll one result during the Determine Applicants phase.

Frequenting Inns, Taverns and so on: The PC frequents locations where prospective henchmen can be found – taverns, inns and so on. Such activity is time consuming and the PC can carry out no other activity while recruiting henchfolk.

INTERVIEWING HENCHFOLK

The PC must interview each prospective henchman to determine if the henchman will serve him (and indeed if the PC wants the henchman in question).

It is considered poor manners to enspell a prospective henchfolk in any way. (This includes divinations such as *detect evil*, *detect thoughts* and so on.) Searching or restraining the applicant in any way results in the applicant leaving at the earliest opportunity.

At the start of the interview, treat the prospective henchfolk as indifferent. (Although, the applicant is interested in serving as a henchman, he is also wary of serving under someone he does not yet like or respect.) Roleplay the meeting using the notes presented with each sample henchman. To make the henchman amenable to enter service, the PC must make him friendly (requiring a DC 15 + henchman Cha modifier Diplomacy check). Apply the following modifiers to the check:

SITUATION	MODIFIER
PC is of an atypical race	-1
PC is same alignment	+1
PC is renown in local area	+2
PC is different alignment (one step)	-1
PC is different alignment (two step)	Will not serve
PC is of same religion	+2
PC offers signing bonus (per 200 gp value)	+1
PC uses magic on the henchman	-4

If the PC fails to render the prospective henchfolk friendly or better, the applicant decides that he doesn't want to serve the PC and leaves. If the PC succeeds, the henchman enters service and the PC must immediately start paying wages and cost of living expenses for the henchman.

UPKEEP & PAY

Once a henchman has accepted employment, the PC must provide wages and upkeep. Additionally, as a henchman accompanies his master on adventures, he gains XP. (See "Advancing Henchfolk" for more information).

Upkeep: A henchfolk accepts upkeep up to one level lower

DESIGNING HENCHFOLK

The sample henchfolk presented in the following section are all 1st-level. Each entry lists basic sex, race and class information along with notes describing the individual's background, personality, mannerisms and distinguishing features. Use these baseline notes to design the henchfolk as a normal NPC, setting their level to two below that of their master. The henchman has equipment worth the normal amount for a heroic NPC of the appropriate level.

than its master's. (Cost of Living, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*, chapter 12). Additionally, if an adventure requires access to certain equipment (either magical or mundane), the henchfolk's employer must provide that equipment free of charge.

Pay: All henchfolk draw a monthly wage from their employer equal to 100 gp per level of the henchfolk. Henchfolk accept permanent magical items in lieu of payment as long as the item(s) in question is useful and relevant to the henchfolk's duties and abilities. Every month a henchfolk goes without pay, his attitude toward is master drops by one step. When a henchfolk becomes unfriendly, he leaves his master unless he is immediately paid double the outstanding debt.

ADVENTURING WITH HENCHFOLK

A henchman accompanies his master on adventures, sharing the risk and reward. While loyal to his master, a henchman is not suicidal and does not sacrifice his life so that his master may live, or expend significant personal resources at his master's request. A henchfolk repeatedly abandoned, abused or cheated leaves his master.

A henchman is also not the party's general servant; he will not fetch and carry for other party members unless ordered to do so by his liege. As with all such interactions in a role-playing game, the GM has the final say on what a henchman will or will not do in any given circumstance.

DISMISSING HENCHFOLK

Through in-game developments or because of other considerations, a player may decide to dismiss a henchman. Roleplay such an event taking into account how the PCs handles the situation. If the henchman and PC part on bad terms, the henchman could rubbish the PC's reputation or even ally himself with the PCs' enemies.

ADVANCING HENCHFOLK

As henchmen adventure, they gain experience and rise in level. To determine how many XP a henchman gains from an adventure, divide its level by its master's level and then multiply this result by the amount of XP gained by the PC. Add the result to the henchfolk's XP total. If a henchfolk is adventuring without his master, he gains XP as normal.

When the henchman accumulates enough XP to gain a level, advance him as a normal NPC.

Henchfolk must always be a lower level than his master. If a henchman ever equals or exceeds his master's level he leaves to seek out his own adventures.

GLOAMHOLD: RIVENGATE

Rambling over five main levels, Rivengate comprises much of Gloamhold's ancient outer defences. Originally built to ward the approaches to the Twilight City it is the most accessible of Gloamhold's regions, and thus also one of the better known.

Still, Rivengate's upper levels remain a mystery to most. Rumours speak of vast, gloomy temples, as yet undisturbed vaults brimming with treasures from a bygone, lost time and even of the Splintered Stair — a secret and precipitous passage reaching — it is said — all the way up to the Shard high atop the Mottled Spire.

Several locales of note lie within Rivengate. Of some, such as the Bridge of Sorrows, the Catacombs of the Sundered Obelisk and the Shrine of the Cloven Altar, little is known but their names. Some of the better known locales in Rivengate, however, include:

THE LANDINGS

Great stone landings, cracked and pitted with age, cluster close to Rivengate's entrance. Once used by Gloamhold's ancient lords for the supply of slaves, tribute and loot to Rivengate the smugglers of Rivengate now use the landings for much the same purpose. Few boats are permanently moored here. The strength of the tides into Gloamhold and along the Murkwater's course coupled with the depredations of rival groups and other predators make such practise folly at best.

THE ECHOES

This huge vaulted chamber stretches the length of the Landings and once served as a marketplace and muster-grounds. Over the centuries many battles and skirmishes have been fought in the Echoes — as it has come to be called. Stout, twisted pillars adorned with intricate, but disturbing, designs reminiscent of tentacles (or possibly impossibly thick strands of seaweed) hold aloft the vaulted ceiling. Great arching support struts hewed from the living rock link the pillars and provide safe havens for several small colonies of giant spiders dwelling far above the floor.

The Echoes' cavernous reaches are a no-man's land of sudden death from above. No smuggler group claims the area, but all use it as it provides access to most of Rivengate. Small bands of smugglers, bearing burning brands to force back the darkness and ever-lurking spiders hurry across this great space with their illicit cargos. Occasionally, when the spiders grow especially bold, the smugglers form a temporary alliance and with fire and blade force the eight-legged predators up into the farthest recesses of the Echoes' ceiling.

To the west, a great balcony stretches the length of the Echoes. Below, stand broken into and looted storage vaults.

Warded by stone doors, desperate explorers occasionally barricade themselves inside a storage vault. The balcony itself provides access to Rivengate's upper levels as well as several sections overlooking Hard Bay. Most smugglers have their lairs in this area and operate a tacit truce with one another. The broad stairs leading up to the balcony are clear of most detritus and rubbish, but bones, discarded equipment and the mouldering leavings of an ancient civilisation all litter the floor of the main chamber.

THE PENS

Gloamhold's original builders often raided the surface realms for prisoners, slaves and sacrifices. Most such unfortunates were brought to this sub-level to be catalogued and sold. Cut deep into the Mottled Spire, this sub-level lies partially under the Murkwater. As a result, cold — almost freezing water — drips through ceilings into the cramped cells and corridors. Some portions of this miserable place are partially submerged. The bones of many of the unfortunately incarcerated in this place yet linger among the chilled pools and rubble. As a result, undead — corporeal and non-corporeal — lurk here in great numbers. Few explorers voluntarily tread these forsaken corridors. Occasionally, a smuggler group — who call this place the Maze of Bones — exiles a member into the Pens in punishment for some terrible transgression against the group. None survive long.

DENIZENS

Although many different creatures lurk in Rivengate, a few groups have achieved greater success than others. As well as small enclaves of undead, still active guardians such as animated statues and magical traps yet ward certain locales, most of which are on the upper levels. Wasted and pale skinned degenerate humans have even been encountered in the upper, remotest reaches of the fortress. How they came to dwell there, none know.

Smugglers: Several smuggler gangs lair in Rivengate's ruins. In the main, the smugglers have little interest in exploring Gloamhold's inner reaches. Rather, they use Rivengate as a safe place to meet and store their ill-gotten gains. Some — wanted for heinous crimes in Languard and its surrounds — permanently dwell in Rivengate. Others come here now and then, as their business dictates. All such groups have contacts among the populace of nearby villages and towns.

Adventurers: Several groups of delvers have set up semi-permanent camps in Rivengate. Such locales are normally located in hidden, hard to access or out of the way places. From these camps, most of the adventurers explore Rivengate's

deeper reaches. The braver or more skilled among them also dare the tight confines of the Twisted Warrens. Here dwell troglodytes, derro and other fell things that lurk in the dark waiting for prey to stumble into their realm.

Other adventurers of darker hearts also lurk in Rivengate. Instead of simply battling the other denizens dwelling here, these folk seek to understand Gloamhold's mysteries and to unlock its builders' secrets. Scholars among them believe that as yet unfound places of power still await discovery in the darkness. What secrets these places hold is unknown.

Adventuring groups known to be active in Gloamhold and its environs include:

- **Gloom Wardens:**

This well known, successful band are veterans of several expeditions deep into the Twisted Warrens in an attempt to force a passage through to the Twilight City. While they have as yet failed to find such a path, their exploits have gained them much fame in Languard's taprooms. It is rumoured, the band are currently recruiting retainers to assist them in establishing a permanent base of operations somewhere in Rivengate.

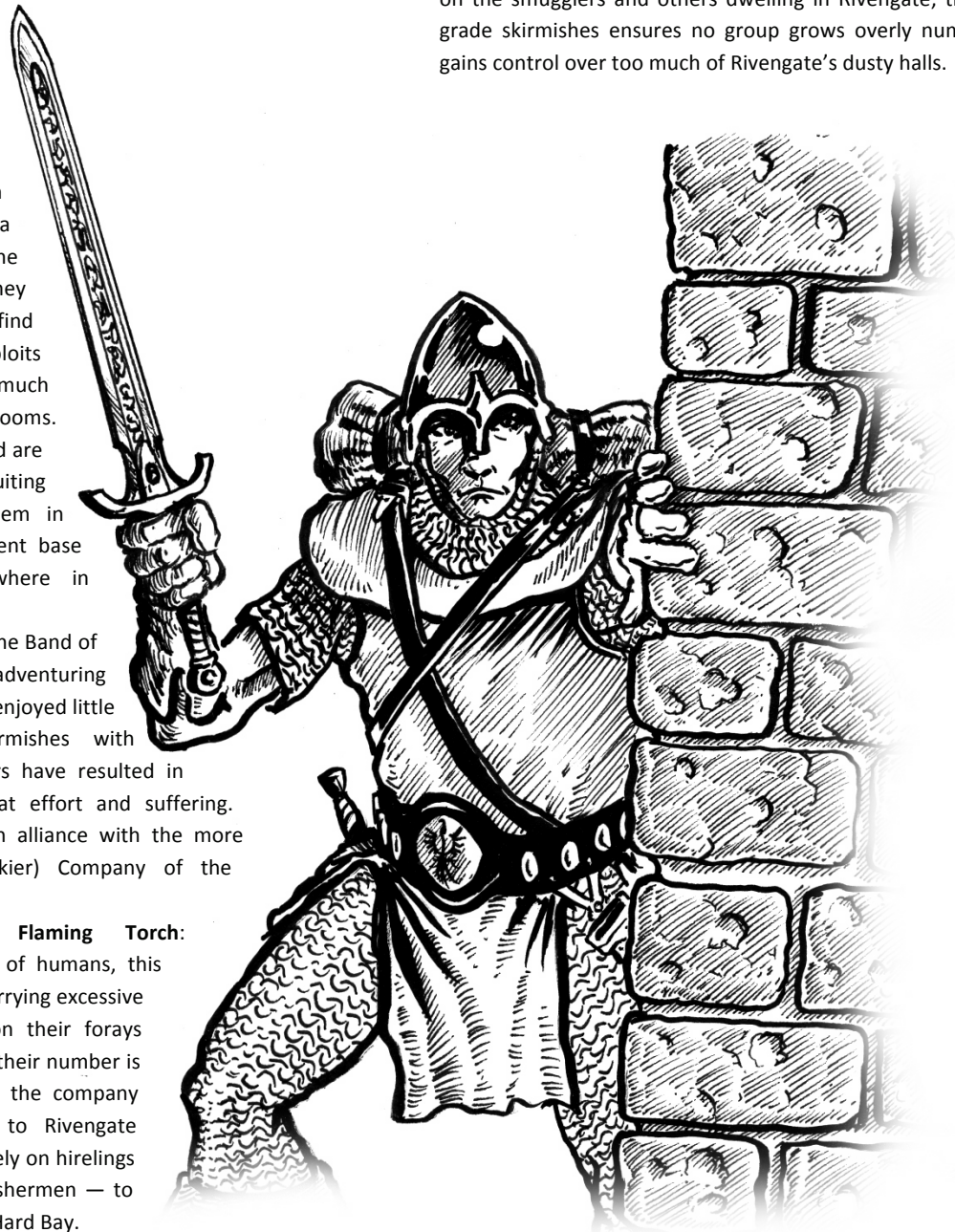
- **Band of Five Swords:** The Band of Five Swords are a new adventuring group that as yet have enjoyed little success. A few skirmishes with troglodytes and spiders have resulted in little treasure for great effort and suffering. They currently seek an alliance with the more experienced (and luckier) Company of the Flaming Torch.

- **Company of the Flaming Torch:**

Comprising exclusively of humans, this band are renown for carrying excessive amounts of torches on their forays into Rivengate. One of their number is a skilled sailor and so the company enjoy greater access to Rivengate than most, who must rely on hirelings — normally doughty fishermen — to transport them across Hard Bay.

- **Valentin's Venturers:** Led by the charismatic paladin, Valentin Eronen, Valentin's Venturers were once more numerous, but a disastrous attempt to navigate the Murkwater led to the deaths of almost half the party and their retainers. Since then, Valentin has sunk into a deep depression, blaming himself for his friends' deaths.

Wanderers: Occasionally, small bands of dark creepers or troglodytes, a lone derro or hunters such as chokers and cave fishers sneak into Rivengate in search of food, slaves or sport. These hunters rarely linger long, retreating into the Twisted Warrens once they have sated their hunger. Such hunters prey on the smugglers and others dwelling in Rivengate; these low-grade skirmishes ensures no group grows overly numerous or gains control over too much of Rivengate's dusty halls.



GM ADVICE: WHY A GM SHOULD KISS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

Have no fear. I'm not suggesting you transform your game into an orgy. After all, some things should not be role-played...

I'm a huge fan of keeping it simple (stupid), or KISS for short. After all, Einstein said, "Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler" and I'm beginning to think he was onto something.

In today's world, there is a natural tendency to embrace complexity. Complexity is all around; it beguiles us with the promise of a better outcome. But, ask yourself this: is the end result worth the extra effort a complex solution requires?

Perhaps, as a player your PC relies on a complex balance of feats, class abilities and equipment while as a GM you regularly run combats featuring six different kinds of opponents using options from a wide range of books. That's fine as far as it goes — and if you are enjoying yourself I'm certainly not going to stop you — but often the simpler solution is easier to design and implement.

Running a simpler game has two major benefits:

- **Quicker Design:** Keeping it simple speeds up prep time immeasurably. Whether it means creating fewer — or easier to run — NPCs or crafting a less Byzantine plot you won't spend so much time salving away between sessions. I'm guessing your life is pretty busy, so this is a Good Thing. Focusing on fewer things — be they monsters, location descriptions, plots or whatever — means you'll make better progress designing those things. Focusing on more game elements (or more complex game elements) means you must either spend more

time designing or spend less time on each design. Neither of those options is ideal.

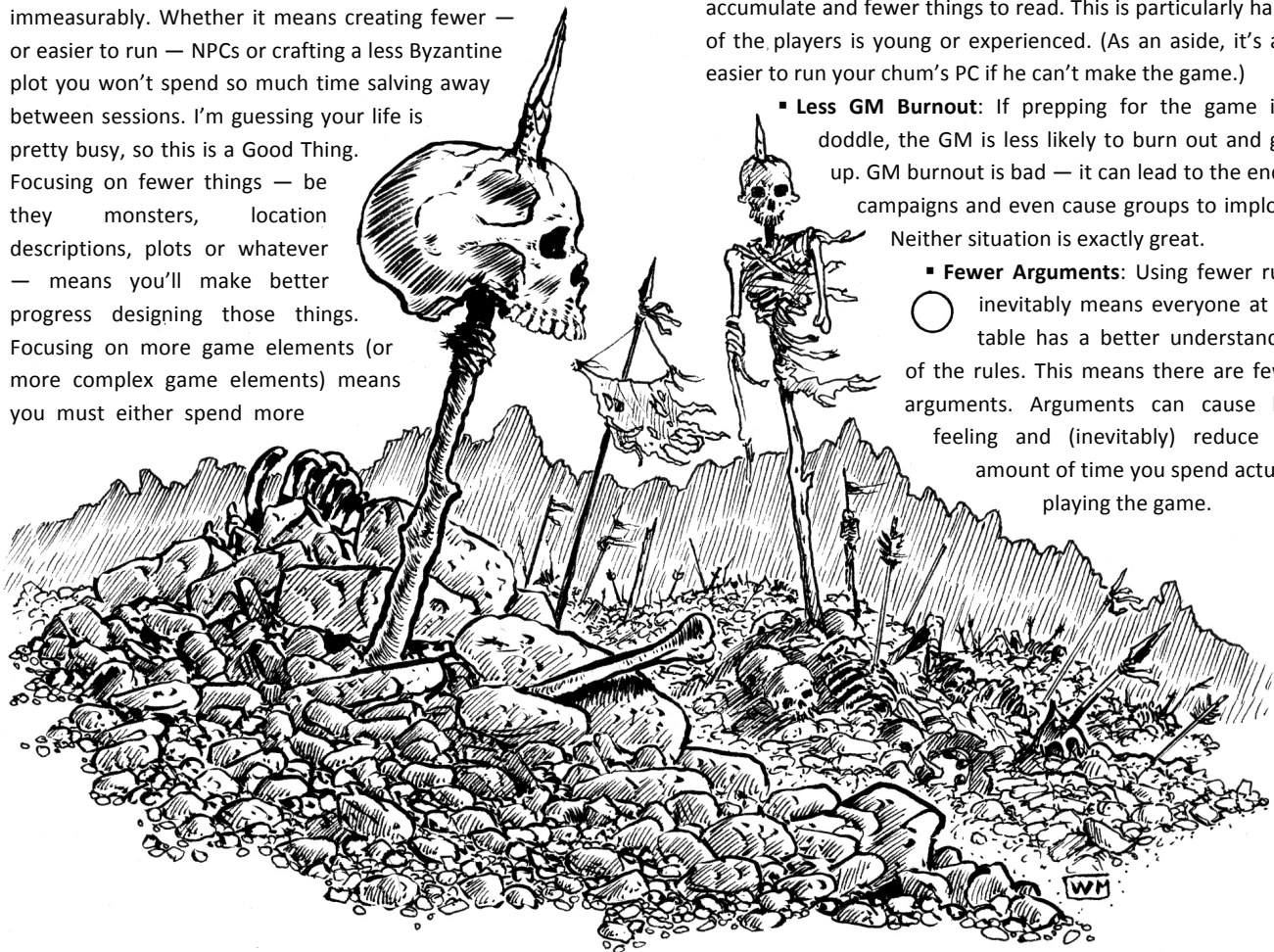
- **Quicker Game Play:** Building simpler NPCs or using fewer different types of foe in a fight speeds up game play. Using rules from one or two books means you'll be using rules you know. This means you'll spend less time looking up new rules options, feats, spells and magic items and more time actually playing the game.

Running a simpler game also has a host of minor benefits. These include:

- **Lower Costs:** If you agree to only allow certain books into your campaign it costs less to play. That's rather handy if your players are at school, have just started a family, moved house and so on
- **Lower Barriers of Entry:** Running a simpler game makes it easier to integrate a new player. They have fewer books to accumulate and fewer things to read. This is particularly handy if the players are young or experienced. (As an aside, it's also easier to run your chum's PC if he can't make the game.)
- **Less GM Burnout:** If prepping for the game is a doddle, the GM is less likely to burn out and give up. GM burnout is bad — it can lead to the end of campaigns and even cause groups to implode.

Neither situation is exactly great.

- **Fewer Arguments:** Using fewer rules inevitably means everyone at the table has a better understanding of the rules. This means there are fewer arguments. Arguments can cause bad feeling and (inevitably) reduce the amount of time you spend actually playing the game.



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